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ABSTRACT

Changes and constancies in the importance of 57 situations and conditions in four stages of Army life are presented and interpreted following Maslow's analysis of the functioning of human needs. Ratings of importance were transformed to z-scores and plotted. Three patterns were observed. It is suggested that: (1) items remain stable because other prepotent needs are less-well-satisfied, (2) items decrease in importance because they are being met to some degree or they were overestimated initially, (3) items increase in importance because they have been satisfied over a long time and are initially underestimated. (Author)

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Abstract

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NEED FUNCTIONING AT FOUR STAGES IN MILITARY SERVICE

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This research is about changes and constancies in the importance of things to men at different stages of Army service. These changes and constancies may be interpreted in terms of Maslow's (1945) analysis of the functioning of human needs.

As part of an evaluation of the Modern Volunteer Army program, large samples of enlisted men were asked to rate 57 different living and working conditions as personally very important, fairly important, or not at all important (Goffard, DeGracie, & Vineberg, 1971). Ratings were obtained at four stages of Army experience at two posts: for the first stage, from 42,223 men in the week before they began Basic Combat Training (BCT); for the second, from 36,649 of the same men at the end of 8 wk. of BCT; and for the third from 8,021 of the same men at the end of 8 wk. of Advanced Individual Training-Infantry (AIT). For the fourth stage, ratings were obtained from 3,078 men who were in the permanent party at these same posts and had served 2 yr. or less in the Army.[1]

A mean rating of personal importance was obtained for each of the 57 items at each of the four stages at each post. To eliminate systematic differences over time, the mean ratings at each stage at each post were transformed to standard scores or *z* scores using the general mean and standard deviation of the items for that stage at that post. The standard scores of each item were then plotted across stages at each post.

Despite the fact that the backgrounds of the men, the management practices, and the innovations being introduced as part of the Modern Volunteer Army program differed very considerably at the two posts, the pattern of relative importance across stages was virtually identical at both posts for any given item.

Three patterns were identified by inspection of these plots: items whose importance remained relatively constant, increased, or decreased over time.[2]

Thirty-two items remained constant at various levels of importance. Examples of these are shown in Fig. 1: "Having a chance to plan my own future," "Having a feeling of usefulness," "Having rules that are fairly enforced," and "Having a variety of entertainment available."

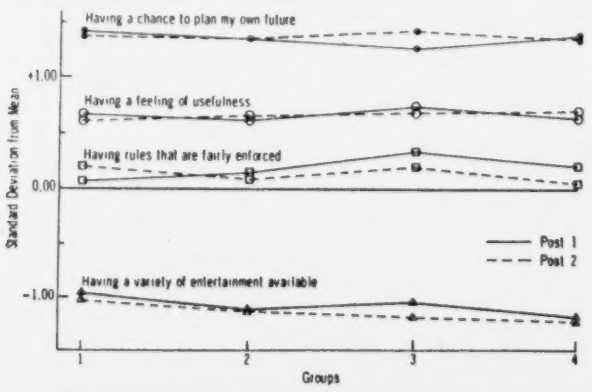

Fig. 1. Items remaining at constant level of importance.

Nine items decreased in importance. Examples in Fig. 2 are "Having respect for superiors," "Forming satisfying friendships," and "Having a place to get together with friends."

Finally, examples of the seven items which increased in importance are shown in Fig. 3: "Having some personal freedom," "Having some privacy," "Having freedom from Mickey Mouse stuff," and "Getting time off for overtime work."

It is suggested that these items roughly define various needs and that relative importance of an item is some function of the potency of the underlying need and its usual level of satisfaction. It seems likely that the *initial* level of importance associated with an item is an estimate of the importance of that need as experienced in civilian life. Any subsequent change in importance is then an interactive function of (*a*) the satisfaction of the need in Army life, (*b*) the satisfaction of other prepotent needs in Army life, and (*c*) the accuracy of the estimate of importance of needs that have long been satisfied prior to entering the Army.

Needs may remain stable because (*a*) they are satisfied as well in the Army as in civilian life or (*b*) while not as well satisfied in the Army, they remain stable because other prepotent needs are less well satisfied and therefore take precedence over them. Examination of the items suggests that the second interpretation fits most of the stable items.

Needs may decrease in importance because (*a*) they are being met to some degree in the Army or (*b*) their importance was overestimated initially, or (*c*) both.

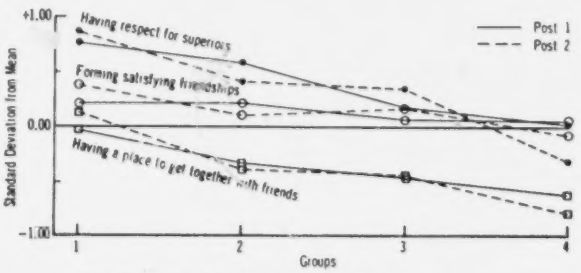

Fig. 2. Items showing a decrease in importance.

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[1] Data were also obtained from permanent party personnel who had served more than 2 yr. in the Army but this group represents a quite different population—one which is on the whole committed to more than a first term in the Army. Their data are not presented here.

[2] There were nine items which did not reveal any particularly meaningful response pattern. These are not discussed here.

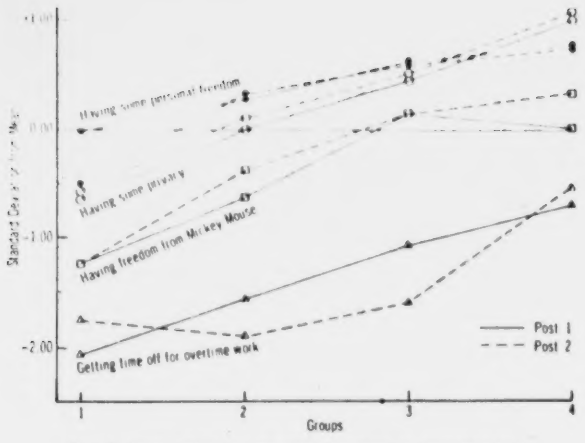

Fig. 3. Items showing marked increase in importance.

The initial relative importance of those items that showed an increase in importance was quite low. The items themselves suggest that the underlying needs were relatively well satisfied for a long time and their importance was underestimated, then after a period of deprivation, their importance was reevaluated at a higher level.

These data, therefore, appear to conform to Maslow's interpretation of the mechanisms underlying need functioning.

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